

## **Fear and Perfume**

a short story by Catherine B. Krause

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You are pulling into the parking lot of the One Stop Mart. There is a large muscular man with an iron cross tattoo and a red beard standing next to a motorcycle, looking at you. You pay attention to the space you are parking in. Don't give yourself away, you say. Walk like you have nothing between your legs. Smile.

Check the mirror. Why haven't you gotten your eyebrows done lately? Gender doesn't care if you rebel against it. Look both ways. Step out the car. Lock it. Eyes on the door. Chest out. Smile but not at him. Smile to yourself. Don't look at him. Open the door and walk into the shop. Get your coffee and go.

Pour coffee. No cream, no sugar; they will make you fat. Put on the lid. Walk up to the counter. Smile. Chest out.

"Will that be all for you today?"

"Yes, thank you."

"One thirty-nine."

"Here you go."

"Thank you, honey. You have a good day."

Smile wide and beam. "You too." You passed. Walk out the door. The man is gone. Go to your car, get in. Good job. You're safe. Drink your coffee. Make a note to get your eyebrows done. Breathe.